

regent of all moral feeling, then it is evident that the *Iliad*, and all books which combine the same tendency with great poetical excellence, are among the most mischievous things on earth. There is but little satisfaction, certainly, in illustrating the operation of evils without proposing any adequate method of contending with them. But in the present case, I really do not see what a serious observer of the character of mankind can offer. To wish that the works of Homer, and some other great authors of antiquity, should cease to be read, is just as vain as to wish they had never been written. As to the far greater number of readers, it were equally in vain to wish that pure Christian sentiments might be sufficiently recollected, and loved, to accompany the study, and constantly prevent the injurious impression, of the works of pagan genius. The few maxims of Christianity to which the student may have assented without thought, and for which he has but little veneration, will but feebly oppose the influence; the spirit of Homer will vanquish as irresistibly as his Achilles vanquished. ^ ^ It is also most perfectly true, that as long as pride, ambition, and vindictiveness, hold so mighty a prevalence in the character and in the nature, of our species, they would still amply display themselves, though the stimulus of heroic poetry were withdrawn, by the annihilation of all those works which have invested the worst passions and the worst actions with a glare of grandeur. With or without the infections of heroic poetry, men and nations will continue to commit offences against one another, and to avenge them ; to assume an arrogant precedence, and account it and laud it as noble spirit; to celebrate their deeds of destruction, and call them glory; to idolize the men who possess, and can infuse, the greatest share of an infernal fire; to set at nought all principles of virtue and religion in favour of some thoughtless vicious mortal who consigns himself in the same achievement to fame and perdition ; to vaunt in triumphal entries or funeral pomps, or bombastic odes, or strings of scalps, how far human skill and valour can surpass the powers of famine and pestilence ; men and nations will continue thus to act, till a mightier intervention from heaven shall establish the dominion of Christianity. In that better season, perhaps the great works of ancient genius will be read in such a disposition of mind as can receive the intellectual